

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Chapter 4: Assessment	Effective Date: September 1, 2013
	Section 19: Family Support/Community Services for Conditionally Safe Children	Version: 7

STATEMENTS OF PURPOSE

During the assessment the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will assist the child's family with the development of a [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) whenever:

1. A safety decision of "Conditionally Safe" has been determined; or
2. An assessment finding of "Substantiated" is reached but DCS will take no further direct intervention.

When domestic violence has been alleged, DCS will create a [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) upon initiation of the assessment and begin planning for the safety of the child and all family members. See Practice Guidance for assistance. The purpose of this plan is to:

1. Achieve immediate and long-term safety for the child and non-offending parent;
2. Provide safety options for the non-offending parent and the child; and
3. Address behaviors demonstrated by the alleged domestic violence offender that pose a risk to the child's safety.

Note: [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) for the non-offending parent and child should not be shared with the alleged domestic violence offender. The Family Case Manager (FCM) should work with the alleged domestic violence offender to develop a separate [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#). If a case is opened, DCS will work with the family to make any necessary changes to the [Family Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) that is developed in the assessment phase to ensure the [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) can be used as a safety plan in the ongoing case.

Following the completion of the Safety Assessment, a [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) will be created as quickly as necessary to protect the safety of the child. If it is identified during the assessment phase that the child's family will require on management (DCS involvement), DCS will utilize the [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) as a safety plan.

Code References

1. [IC 35-37-6-1: "Confidential Communication" defined](#)
2. [IC 34-6-2-34.5 Domestic or Family Violence](#)

PROCEDURE

The FCM will:

1. Discuss in detail with the family the implementation of either of the interventions below that were chosen as part of the safety response:
 - a. The family uses extended family resources, neighbors, or other individuals in the community to ensure the child's safety, and/or
 - b. The family receives services through community providers.

2. Write a [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) with the family's participation. The plan should describe in detail how, when, and by whom each intervention will be implemented;
3. Specify the consequences for the family if an intervention is not followed;
4. Specify how the FCM will monitor and support the family's compliance with the plan until the completion of the assessment;
5. Have the parents, guardian, or custodian sign the plan; and
6. Re-assess the child's safety before closing the assessment.
See separate policy, [4.25 Completing the Assessment](#).

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Protective Factors

Protective factors are characteristics in families that, when present, increase the safety, stability, permanency, and well-being of children and families. Protective factors are directly connected to the strengths of the family and can be used as a resource to learn new skills and solve problems. The FCM should consider the following protective factors when working with children and families:

1. Nurturing and attachment to the child;
2. Knowledge of parenting and of child and youth development;
3. Parental resilience;
4. Social connections;
5. Concrete supports for the parents and
6. Social and emotional competence of children.

Family Support/Community Services Planning with Assessments Involving Domestic Violence

DCS will partner with the non-offending parent and child to create a [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) in all assessments where domestic violence has been identified. If the non-offending parent has met with a domestic violence service provider to create a domestic violence Safety/Survival Plan, the [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) can be revised to incorporate the Safety/Survival Plan that was created.

Note: DCS will not create a Safety/Survival Plan with the non-offending parent and child. Domestic violence Safety/Survival Plans can best be created by referring the non-offending parent to a domestic violence program in the community.

This [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) should address the following:

1. Safety for the non-offending parent and child until he or she can meet with a domestic violence advocate;
2. Referrals to domestic violence programs;
3. Financial assistance;
4. Other community services available; and
5. What will happen after the FCM leaves and/or DCS is no longer involved

The plan should include strategies to reduce the risk of physical violence and harm by the alleged domestic violence offender and enhance the protection of the child and non-offending parent. [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) for individuals living with domestic violence will vary depending on whether the non-offending parent is separated from the alleged domestic violence offender, thinking about leaving, returning to, or remaining in the relationship. Specific planning may include:

1. Engaging the non-offending parent in a discussion about the options available to keep him or her and the child safe, including what has been tried before;
2. Exploring the benefits and disadvantages of specific options, and creating individualized solutions for each family;
3. Utilizing the criminal justice and civil court systems to hold the alleged domestic violence offender accountable; and
4. Writing down a list of phone numbers of neighbors, friends, family, and community service providers that the non-offending parent can contact for safety, resources, and services. This requires FCMs to stay current about resources, contacts, and legal options.

Including Children in the Planning Process

The child should be engaged in safety planning; however, they are not responsible for their own safety and should not be responsible for implementing the Family Support/Community Services/Safety Plan. If during the initial interview, the child is unable to identify who they would call or where they would go in an emergency, work with them to develop a basic plan for safety.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Find a safe adult and ask for help whenever they experience violence. This may involve calling supportive family members, friends, or community agencies for help;
2. Escape from the house if an assault is imminent or in progress and where to meet an identified safe adult. If they cannot escape, discuss where they can go to be safe in the house;
3. Avoid being in the middle of the domestic violence;
4. Find a place to go in an emergency and the steps to take to find safety; and
5. Call the police or 911 when the violence begins.

Tracking and Adjusting of Family Support/Community Services Plans

From the point it was identified that a Family Support/Community Services Plan was needed, DCS engages the child, family and CFT and develops certain intervention strategies to transition the family forward towards sustainable changes and making a difference in the family situation. During the course of the assessment, many of these strategies are strengthened and certain tasks are completed which require further adjustment. If referrals are completed, follow-up may be required. See separate policy, [5.1 Transitioning from Assessment](#).

FORMS AND TOOLS

[Family Support/Community Services/Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

General

The [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) is a written agreement between DCS and the parent(s), guardian, or custodian(s) specifying what extended family supports or community services will be utilized and how those will ensure the immediate safety of the child. The plan should contain action steps and these action steps should have deadlines for completion that do not extend beyond the end of the assessment. All actions should relate directly to the child's immediate safety. The [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) is a voluntary, non-legally binding agreement with the family that cannot contradict any existing court orders, including, but not limited to child support and child custody orders.

Parental Involvement in Development

Involvement of the family in the development of a [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) is imperative. The greater the family's participation in this process, the more ownership they will have in a successful outcome. For this reason, it is critical that the FCM focus the discussion on the safety of the child and not on the allegation(s). When developing the plan with the family, the FCM should speak in such a way as to develop a common understanding that the safety of the child is contingent on their ability and willingness to follow the terms of the plan. If the family is hesitant or unwilling to create a plan and/or commit to abiding by the plan's terms, remind the parent that the child may not be safe under present circumstances.

Extended Family Support

Extended family members are often the most resourceful and most effective as resources for support and their interventions are least disruptive to the child involved. Family support services may consist of childcare, transportation, home management assistance and teaching of skills, and financial assistance for housing, food, or clothing on a short term basis.

Referring the Family to Community Services

Community services are an appropriate intervention if they help the family control or mitigate the identified safety factors. Examples include routine or emergency medical care or mental health care (outpatient), alcohol or substance abuse services, in-home health care, day care, respite care, child-oriented activities (e.g., Libraries, Boy Scouts), home management and/or life skills, parenting skills, individual or family crisis counseling, financial services, housing services, transportation services, food and clothing assistance, etc.

Change in Household Composition

If it is determined by DCS that a temporary change in household composition will provide the family with an opportunity to address the safety and risk issues present during the time of the assessment; a change in the household can occur if it is in the best interest of the child. See separate policy [4.37 Change in Household Composition](#).

If the child and the child and parent temporarily move to an alternative location:

1. That location must be safe for the child; and
2. If there is another caregiver for the child, that caregiver must agree to provide a safe environment for the child.

A change in household composition would be documented in the [Safety Plan \(SF 53243\)](#) or outlining the family's plan in the CFT meeting notes.

It is important to understand that changes within a family's household will impact the child's well-being. Therefore the circumstances resulting in the temporary change of household shall be rectified within 5 days or court action will be initiated. See separate policies [5.9 Informal Adjustment](#) and [6.2 Filing a CHINS Petition](#).

At any time during an assessment when there is a restriction placed on any parent regarding contact with a child and/or his or her parent, a CHINS Petition will be filed. If the restriction is placed on another adult in the household, for example a boyfriend or girlfriend of a parent, the FCM will ensure that contact will not occur between that person and the child until the safety circumstance has been remedied. The non-biological household member does not have the same right of access to a child as the biological parent.

Some flexibility in the filing of CHINS will allow those we serve to have the primary responsibility for the care and safety of their children. When there is an identified correctable situation, the partnership between our agency, families and the community will work together for the best outcome.

Domestic Violence Advocates and Confidentiality

According to [IC 35-37-6-1](#) communications between victims of domestic violence and victim advocates are confidential, even if certain third parties are present when information is exchanged. Victim advocates cannot give testimony without victim consent in CHINS proceedings.

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